

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 218

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, MORG, MILI, SP
SUBJECT: NEW YEAR PROMISES FURTHER MILITARY CHANGES IN SPAIN

SUMMARY: A RAPID-FIRE SERIES OF MEASURES AT THE YEAR'S TURN
AFFECTING THE SPANISH MILITARY, SUPPLEMENTED BY A ROUND OF
FORWARD-LOOKING SPEECHES BY THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP, GIVES
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PROMISE OF BOTH CONTINUED ACCEPTANCE BY THE SPANISH MILITARY
OF THE POLITICAL REFORM PROCESS AND OF FURTHER PROFESSIONAL
REFORMS MAKING THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT MORE A PART OF THAT
PROCESS. END SUMMARY.

1. AS THE SECOND POST-FRANCO YEAR BEGINS, SPANIARDS CAN LOOK
BACK ON A YEAR OF SUBSTANTIAL POLITICAL CHANGE ACCOMPLISHED

CERTAINLY WITH FEWER ROADBLOCKS THAN MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED FROM A CONSERVATIVE, LARGELY FRANCOIST (BUT CHANGING) MILITARY LEADERSHIP. SINCE THE LATE SUMMER CONTRETEMPS WITH GENERALS SANTIAGO AND INIESTA (BOTH STILL JOBLESS), COOPERATION BETWEEN CIVILIAN AND MILITARY LEADERS HAS IMPROVED, WITH PRIME MINISTER SUAREZ AND FIRST VICE PRESIDENT FOR DEFENSE MATTERS LT GEN GUTIERREZ MELLADO IN PARTICULAR WORKING WELL TOGETHER TOWARD SHARED OBJECTIVES. WHILE PROBLEMS REMAIN, MODERATE POLITICAL REFORMERS, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THOSE ADVOCATING LEGALIZATION OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY, AT PRESENT ARE NOT FINDING THE MILITARY A MAJOR OBSTACLE TO THEIR DESIGNS.

2. THE END OF 1976 BROUGHT A FLURRY OF POSITIVE ACTIVITY ON THE

MILITARY FRONT, INCLUDING:

- CREATION BY THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF A SPECIAL COMMISSION FOR MILITARY AFFAIRS WHICH, UNDER THE DIRECT LEADERSHIP OF PRIME MINISTER SUAREZ, WILL TREAT FUNDAMENTAL ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS;
- MOVES TO RELIEVE THE ARMY AND AIR FORCE MINISTERS OF OPERATIONAL COMMAND OF TROOPS (CONSIDERED AN IMPORTANT PREPARATORY STEP TOWARD ESTABLISHMENT OF A DEFENSE MINISTRY);
- APPOINTMENT OF NEW BOSSES OF ALL THREE NATIONAL PUBLIC ORDER FORCES (DGS/POLICE, ARMED POLICE, CIVIL GUARD), MOST NOTABLE BEING THE FIRING OF THE HARD-LINE CIVIL GUARD CHIEF, CAMPANO;
- A SHARP CUTBACK IN MILITARY JURISDICTION IN SUBVERSION/ TERRORISM CASES (TO THOSE AFFECTING MILITARY PERSONNEL OR INSTITUTIONS);
- CREATION OF SYSTEM OF ALTERNATIVE CIVILIAN SERVICE FOR CONFIDENTIAL

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CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS;

- A POSITIVE SPANISH NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE STUDY ON NATO (OFFSET BY AN ON BALANCE STILL RATHER NEGATIVE MEDIA DEBATE).
- IN THE AIR ALSO WERE RUMORS OF CHANGES AMONG THE MILITARY MINISTERS (PRINCIPALLY FOCUSING ON THE POLITICALLY INEPT ARMY MINISTER, ALVAREZ-ARENAS), AND THE CERTAINTY OF APPOINTMENT SOON OF REPLACEMENTS FOR THE ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF AND THE CHIEF OF THE KING'S MILITARY HOUSEHOLD (BOTH INCUMBENTS HAVING PASSED TO SEMI-ACTIVE STATUS), WITH MORE PROGRESSIVE REPLACEMENTS PREDICTED. PUBLIC DISCUSSION OF THE BENEFITS OF FORMATION OF A DEFENSE MINISTRY ALSO HAS RENEWED, WITH THE FOCUS CLEARLY ON HOW AND WHEN RATHER THAN ON WHETHER.

3. EVEN COMMUNIST (PCE) LEADER SANTIAGO CARILLO ENTERED INTO THE SPIRIT OF THINGS, COMMENTING LAST WEEK TO THE MAGAZINE "CAMBIO 16" THAT "THE MILITARY OF TODAY IS DIFFERENT, MORE PROFESSIONAL, WITH A MISSION OF DEFENSE OF THE INDEPENDENCE AND LIBERTY OF THE NATION."

4. ALSO NOTEWORTHY WAS THE "SOMETHING NEW" IN THIS YEAR'S ROUND OF NEW YEAR'S SPEECH-MAKING BY THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP. NOTABLY ABSENT WERE THE POINTED REFERENCES OF THE PAST TO THE MILITARY'S DUTY TO DEFEND THE CONSTITUTIONAL (READ EXISTING) ORDER. IN THEIR PLACE: A MORE OPEN, PRAGMATIC DEALING WITH PROBLEMS, INCLUDING THE PROMISE OF DEALING WITH THEM VIA CHANGES IN SOME OLD WAYS OF DOING THINGS.

5. THE KING WHO, SPEAKING IN JAN 6 CEREMONIES AS CAPTAIN GENERAL OF THE ARMED FORCES, RECOGNIZED THE DIFFICULTY OF MAINTAINING DISCIPLINE IN A TIME OF GREAT CHANGE, MUST HAVE BEEN PLEASED WITH THE QUITE REMARKABLE ADDRESS TO HIM OF LT GEN GUTIERREZ MELLADO. GUTIERREZ MELLADO DEFINED THE MILITARY MISSION AS ONE OF LOYALTY TO THE CROWN, DEFENSE OF NATIONAL UNITY WITH RESPECT FOR REGIONAL VARIETY, THE CONTRIBUTION OF AN ELEMENT OF PEACE AND STABILITY IN A TIME OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CHANGE, NON-INTERFERENCE IN POLITICAL QUESTIONS, AND PROVISION OF AN

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EFFECTIVE INSTRUMENT OF FOREIGN POLICY CAPABLE OF EFFECTIVE COOPERATION WITH OTHER FORCES OF THE FREE WORLD IN THE DEFENSE OF PEACE.

6. HE STRESSED THE NEED FOR DISCIPLINE WITHIN THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT AND SPELLED OUT A SERIES OF REFORM PROJECTS FOR THE NEAR AND LONG-TERM IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NEED FOR THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF GREATER INTER-SERVICE UNITY. REVISION OF THE ORGANIC DEFENSE LAW AND A LONG-NEEDED DEFINITION OF WHAT CONSTITUTE THE LIMITS OF ACCEPTABLE POLITICAL ACTIVITY FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL BOTH WERE ON HIS LIST OF SHORT-TERM MEASURES. FOR THE MEDIUM TO LONG-TERM, HE CALLED, INTER ALIA, FOR AN OVERHAUL OF DEFENSE PRIORITIES, FORCE GOALS, TERMS OF SERVICE AND MILITARY PRODUCTION AND PROCUREMENT POLICY. (DETAILS WILL BE REPORTED BY SEPARATE DAO MESSAGE.)

7. IN SEPARATE CEREMONIES A DAY EARLIER, THE THREE SERVICE MINISTERS ALSO LAID STRESS ON THE OBLIGATION PLACED ON THE MILITARY TO FOLLOW CIVIL POLITICAL LEADERSHIP, THIS BEING PARTICULARLY POINTED IN THE CASE OF ARMY MINISTER ALVAREZ-ARENAS, WHO ADDED IN A MOMENT OF APPARENT FRANKNESS THAT THIS WAS REQUIRED EVEN IF SOME OF THE GOVT'S ORDERS WERE NOT UNDERSTOOD. ALL THREE MINISTERS LAID GREAT EMPHASIS ON THEIR GROWING BUDGETARY PROBLEMS, AGGRAVATED BY RAPID INFLATION, DRAWING FROM THE KING THE NEXT DAY A PROMISE TO DO WHAT HE COULD. WITH REFORMIST PROPOSALS FOCUSING MORE ON THE ARMY THAN ON THE OTHER TWO SERVICES, ALVAREZ-ARENAS RESPONDED BY CALLING FOR REORGANIZATION THIS YEAR OF THE ARMY, LEADING TO A SMALLER, BETTER EQUIPPED, MORE OPERATIONAL FORCE, WITH BARRACKS BEING MOVED AWAY FROM URBAN CENTERS INTO THE MANEUVER AREAS, TRAINING BEING INTENSIFIED, AND THE MINIMUM TIME IN SERVICE (NOW 15 MONTHS)

BEING REDUCED.

8. COMMENT: NONE OF THIS SHOULD SUGGEST THAT NO PROBELMS
REMAIN FOR SUAREZ AND COMPANY IN BRINGING THE MILITARY ALONG
IN THE REFORM PROCESS. THE PERSONNELCHANGES OF RECENT
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MONTHS AT HIGH LEVELS IN THE MILITARY AND PUBLIC ORDER
FORCES HAVE CAUSED CONSIDERABLE GRUMBLING IN ULTRA CONSERVATIVE
MILITARY CIRCLES, BUT THESE ARE REGARDED AS MANAGEABLE.
ALSO REMAINING AS PROBLEMS COMPLICATED BY STRONG
MILITARY ATTITUDES ARE THE LEGALIZATION OF THE
COMMUNIST PARTY, REGIONAL AUTONOMY, AND THE POSTURE OF
THE PUBLIC ORDER FORCES IN THE BASQUE PROVINCES. ALL
THIS HAS NOT CHANGED DRAMATICALLY FROM THE SITUATION SIX
MONTHS AGO. WHAT HAS CHANGED IS THAT PRACTICAL MILITARY
LEADERS, SUPPORTIVE OR ACCEPTIVE OF MODERATE REFORM,
HAVE NOW GAINED A NUMBER OF KEY POSITIONS AND GREATER
CONFIDENCE. THANKS MORE TO GUTIERREZ MELLADO THAN TO
ANY OTHER SINGLE PERSON, THE INITIATIVE HAS SHIFTED
AWAY FROM THE BUNKER IN THE MILITARY. WITH REFORM OF
THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT ITSELF NOW BEGINNING TO TAKE
HOLD, THE RISK IS ALSO REDUCED OF ITS STANDING ISOLATED
OUTSIDE THE BROAD PROCESS OF CHANGE. STABLER

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